

METRIC TRANSITION PLAN AND POLICY

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish policy, assign responsibility, and provide guidance to National Cemetery System (NCS) personnel for conversion to the metric system of measurement within NCS. The provisions apply to all NCS facilities.
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** To implement the metric system in a manner consistent with the law and VA's metric transition plan and policy. NCS supports the Department's transition to convert to the metric system by ensuring that key officials use the metric system in procurements, grants, and other business-related activities consistent with security, operational, economic, technical, logistical, training, and safety requirements. For example, originators of proposals for grants, interagency agreements, and contracts submitted after September 1992 are required to use the metric system of weights and measures. Likewise, originators of reports, publications and communications regarding proposals will be required to use metric.
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Director has designated the Director, Budget and Planning Service (402A), as its Metric Coordinator (MC) (and as its liaison with VHA, VBA and staff offices). The MC will represent NCS in all matters pertaining to metrics, participate as a member of VA's Metric Task Group (MTG), and serve as chairperson of NCS' MTG. Questions should be referred to the NCS Metric Liaison (402A) at (202) 273-5157.
4. **RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Circular 00-92-11 (expired July 1, 1993, established policies and responsibilities for implementing the metric system of measurement within the Department of Veterans Affairs). It is being revised and is expected to be published in early 1995.
VHA Directive 10-94-064, Metric Implementation
5. **RESCISSIONS:** None.

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METRIC TRANSITION PLAN AND POLICY**1. PURPOSE**

This directive establishes policy, assigns responsibility, and provides guidance to National Cemetery System (NCS) personnel for conversion to the metric system of measurement within NCS. The provisions apply to all NCS facilities.

2. POLICY

a. The Metric Conversion Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-168) states in part "that the policy of the United States shall be to coordinate and plan the increasing use of the metric system in the United States."

b. On August 23, 1988, the President signed the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-418). Section 5164 of that Act amended the Metric Conversion Act of 1975 to affirm:

(1) That "the Federal Government has a responsibility to develop procedures and techniques to assist industry, especially small business, as it voluntarily converts to the metric system of measurement."

(2) That "the metric system of measurement is the preferred system of weights and measures for United States trade and commerce."

(3) That "each Federal agency, by a date certain and to the extent economically feasible by the end of Fiscal Year 1992, use the metric system of measurement in its procurements, grants, and other business-related activities, except to the extent that such use is impractical or is likely to cause significant inefficiencies or loss of markets to United States firms, such as when foreign competitors are producing competing products in non-metric units."

(4) That agencies are "to seek out ways to increase understanding of the metric system of measurement through educational information and guidance and in Government publications."

(5) That "each agency is to establish guidelines to carry out the policy as set forth . . . shall report to Congress the actions it has taken . . . as well as the actions it plans for the fiscal year involved, to implement fully the metric system of measurement in accordance with that policy."

c. In accordance with the above, NCS will implement the metric system in a manner and on a schedule consistent with the law and VA's metric transition plan and policy. NCS will support the Department's transition, Federal change and national conversion to the metric system through the Director, NCS, by ensuring that Office Directors, Service Directors, Division Chiefs, Cemetery Directors and other key officials use the metric system in procurements, grants, and other business-related activities consistent with security, operational, economic, technical, logistical, training, and safety requirements.

d. The Director, NCS, shall establish an active process for policy level review of any decision not to use metric measurement units, documentation of which will be forwarded to VA's Metric Executive (Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition and Materiel Management (OA&MM) (90)) for review and concurrence.

e. NCS will encourage private industry to change to the metric system by acquiring commercially available metric products and services that meet the functional requirements of NCS and its customers, so long as competition (Competition in Contracting Act requirements) is maintained. In addition, in compliance with the Secretary's circular, the following statement will be included in all NCS procurements that identify measurements in their requirements:

"Metric Products. Products manufactured to metric dimensions will be considered on an equal basis with those manufactured using inchpound units, provided they fall within the tolerances specified using conversion tables contained in the latest revision of Federal Standard No. 376B (Attachment A), and all other requirements of this document are met. If a product is manufactured to metric dimensions and those dimensions exceed the tolerances specified in the inchpound units, a request should be made to the contracting officer to determine if the product is acceptable. The contracting officer will accept or reject the product." (Copies of the Federal Standard 376B may be obtained from Federal Supply Service Bureau, Specifications Section, Suite 1800, 470 East L'Enfant Plaza SW, Washington, D. C. 20407.)

The above statement will not be used when a requirement has been identified in hard metric measurements.

f. NCS specifications and standards will be developed in metric when it is the accepted industry system. Commercially developed metric specifications and internationally or domestically developed voluntary standards using metric will be adopted whenever possible. When metric is not the predominant system used by suppliers, NCS will convert, and use hybrid or dual

dimensions during transition. As soon as it becomes practical it is expected that soft, dual and hybrid English metric measurements will be replaced with hard metric measurements.

g. Existing specifications or standards in inch-pound units are to be converted as soon as possible or when the specifications or standards are updated under normal conditions.

h. The measurement units in which a system is originally designed may be retained for the life of that system unless conversion is necessary or advantageous.

i. Bulk (loose) materials normally will be specified and accepted in metric units. Measuring devices and shop equipment should be procured in metric or dual units when possible.

j. Originators of proposals for grants, interagency agreements, and contracts submitted after September 1992 are required to use the metric system of weights and measures. Likewise, originators of reports, publications and communications regarding proposals will be required to use metric.

k. Costs associated with metric conversion will be considered by NCS as normal operating expenses and not as special one-time costs. These costs are to be identified and reported to the extent practicable. Substantial cost savings which are result of metric conversion, and such costs related to metric aids, tools, equipment, and training, are to be included in each annual report filed with VA's Metric Executive.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Coordination:** VA-wide Metric Coordination is the responsibility of the VA Metric Executive Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition and Materiel Management (90). Any NCS contact with the VA Metric Executive will be through the NCS Metric Coordinator or delegate.

b. **Exemptions:**

(1) The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition and Materiel Management (90) is responsible for approving exemptions for all categories of items (except new construction and renovation projects) and services that require conversion to the metric system of measurement.

(2) The Associate Chief Medical Director For Construction Management (08) will be responsible for approving exemptions for new construction and renovation projects, in part or total, from English units (inch-pound) to the metric system of measurements.

c. **Changes:**

(1) Changes to VA's construction specifications (which will impact NCS metric conversion plans for new construction and renovation projects) will be performed by the Facilities Quality Office (087C).

(2) Changes to VA's X-series specifications will be executed by OA&MM.

(3) Changes to NCS X-series specifications for its Headstone and Marker Program will be executed by the Office of Memorial Programs' Acquisition and Transportation Service (403B), with the approval of (90).

d. **Training:** The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Personnel and Labor Relations (05) is responsible for identifying and coordinating appropriate metrication training programs for VA employees. NCS will utilize these programs to increase employee awareness and understanding of the metric system of weights and measures. Because exposure to metrics in theory without practical application (hands-on use) is often unproductive for the employee, training in metric measurements should occur at a point when employees are about to utilize metrics in their respective job environments.

e. **NCS Metric Coordinator.** The Director has designated the Director, Budget and Planning Service (402A), as its Metric Coordinator (MC) and as its liaison with VHA, VBA and staff offices. The MC will represent NCS in all matters pertaining to metrics, participate as a member of VA's Metric Task Group (MTG), and serve as chairperson of NCS' MTG. The Coordinator shall also:

(1) Provide guidance and assistance to NCS program activities to ensure a uniform and coordinated approach to implementing the requirements of the Act.

(2) With the approval of the Director, NCS, establish a Metric Task Group (MTG) which will, with the concurrence of VA's Metric Coordinator, make amendments to this directive. In addition, NCS' Metric Coordinator will interpret the provisions of this directive.

(3) Promote and establish division or section level working groups to evaluate and identify areas which may be measurement sensitive.

(4) Ensure that data concerning NCS metrication progress (and any problems encountered) are collected annually to meet reporting requirements of Public Law 100-418, Executive Order 12770, VA Circular 00-92-11, and subsequent VA directives concerning metrics.

f. **The Directors of the Offices of Field Operations (401), Operations Support (402), and Memorial Programs (403)** shall ensure that all measurement sensitive program activities for which they are responsible are identified, and plans to convert those elements to metric units are developed and implemented. Further, they will each appoint an individual as their metric coordinator who will:

(1) Represent their office as a member of NCS' Metric Task Group.

(2) Coordinate their metrication plans with the NCS Metric Coordinator.

(3) Ensure that an annual report is filed with (402A) by October 15 of each year, for the previous fiscal year.

(4) Maintain a file concerning their metrication plans, goals, and accomplishments for each fiscal year of metric implementation.

(5) Maintain a file for metric information and conversion reference material.

(6) Ensure that metric training opportunities are made available to their employees.

g. **Reports.** The Directors of the Offices of Field Operations, Operations Support and Memorial Programs shall submit a report concerning their plans and accomplishments by October 15 of each year, for the previous fiscal year, to the Director, Budget and Planning Service (402A), NCS Metric Coordinator.

(1) The NCS Metric Coordinator shall consolidate the above reports into an annual NCS Metric Report. This report shall be submitted to the VA Metric Executive (90) by November 1 of each year for inclusion in its report to the Secretary for submission to Congress as part of VA's annual budget.

(2) The reporting shall cease in the year after full implementation of the metric system is completed by VA. Questions on reporting requirements should be directed to NCS' Metric Coordinator (402A) at (202) 273-5157 or VA's Metric Executive (92A) at (202) 273-6103.

4. REFERENCES

a. Presidential Executive Order 12770, Metric Usage in Federal Government Programs, signed July 25, 1991, further defines the Act's intent.

b. VA Circular 00-92-11, which expired July 1, 1993, established policies and responsibilities for implementing the metric system of measurement within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It is being revised and is expected to be published in early 1995.

c. Public Law 94-168.

d. Public Law 100-418

e. Executive Order 12770

f. Federal Standard 376B (see Appendix A)

5. DEFINITIONS

a. **Metrication** - Any act that increases the use of the metric system, including metric training and initiation or conversion of measurement sensitive processes and systems to the metric system.

b. **Metric system** - The International System of Units (Le Systeme International d' Unites (SI)) of the International Bureau of Weights and Measures. Most units NCS will use are listed in Federal Standard 376B (Appendix A), "Preferred Metric Units for General Use by the Federal Government."

- c. **Hard metric** - The use of only metric (SI) measurements in specifications, standards, supplies, and services.
- d. **Soft metric** - The mathematical conversion of inchpound measurements to metric equivalents in specifications, standards, supplies, and services. The physical dimensions are not changed.
- e. **Dual dimension** - The use of both inchpound and metric measurements. For example, an item is designed, produced, and described in inchpound values with soft metric values also shown for information or comparison purposes.
- f. **Hybrid systems** - The use of both inchpound and hard metric values in specifications, standards, supplies, and services; e.g., an engine with internal parts described in metric dimensions and external fittings or attachments described in inch-pound dimensions.

6. RESCISSION

This NCS directive expires on September 30, 1997.